

Awase is the newsletter of the
Aikido Institute of Davis, a dojo where you
can learn the arts of Aikido and Tai Chi.

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THE YELLOW CHICK AND THE BROWN CHICK

Hoa Newens Sensei

*This article was inspired by a conversation with a
veterinarian during a dojo party.*



Awareness • Humility • Perseverance

Artwork by Serena Shimada

A hen mother took its seven chicks for a morning walk to forage for food. As she led them through the green meadows, a brown chick decided to seek adventure and took a turn on its own, a yellow chick got inspired and also went on its way. Soon both chicks were on their own, out of their mother's sight and brood. They found worms to eat and things to have fun with. They got covered with dirt and bruise, but they satisfied an inner urge to seek.

After wandering in separate ways for an entire day they got tired. Now they long for the safety of the brood and the motherly love. They chipped and chirped, apart from each other and lonely. The mother and the brood are nowhere to be seen or heard.

A little girl wandering by saw the yellow chick exhausted, dirty and down. She picked it up and brought it home. She cleaned it up and nursed it. Not knowing what was happening, the yellow chick fought back fiercely. In time, despite its resistance the little girl restored the chick's health.

The chick gradually calmed down as it regained vigor and clarity. It learned to conquer its fears, quiet down and listen to nature and what is. It began to recall the mother's familiar cluck. It kept listening more and more intently, and one day, a familiar sound came from

a place that it could not locate. Perhaps from deep inside the heart or was it nearby outside? Does it matter, now that the reassuring clucking of mother hen is becoming clearer? The yellow chick found home, with the help of a little girl, through acceptance and quietude.

Its sibling, the brown chick, was not as fortunate. It went on for several days, roaming the meadows, crossing streams and conquering heights. Surviving predators' hunt and inclement weather. Through trials and tribulations it learned the ways of the world. Through adversity it built its own character and acquired wisdom.

One day it heard the calling of the brood loud and clear from deep inside. It set its intent on returning home. It summoned all the acquired wisdom and knowledge and found home.

Thus, the yellow chick and the brown chick both found their way home. One with some assistance from above and the other on its own, albeit later. Irrespective of their path, they found home. Sooner or later, does it matter? Hence the question, does one need a guide or teacher along the path? For quick answers, go ask the yellow and the brown chicks. You may get answers, and likely not the answer.



On Being Movable

Jan Ng

"Pain is information," my first Aikido instructor advised as she carefully put me in a *sankyo* lock that guided me upright, onto my tiptoes, and backwards. That advice has proven insightful over the years. Recently, while I've been on the mat, pain has been telling me that my rolls need work. Of course, my rolls will perpetually need work. And of course, I am adjusting to a new style of *ukemi* at this dojo. Beyond these factors, however, I have recently been hitting bones when I'm rolling that I have not in hit in years, or perhaps ever. Consistently. Painfully.

My Aikido practice is always a reflection of self, whatever my present state may be at a given time: how flexible I am (or am not), how tired I am, how I feel when I interact with people, how centered, how sincere, how aware... Aikido has me working with whatever I come in the door with, and when I am paying attention, Aikido tells me about myself – my body, my mind, my emotions, and my spirit – and how that self is growing and changing over time.

These days, Aikido is telling me that my physical self is more fragile than usual. This isn't a particularly comfortable reality, for me. After years of martial arts, working in kitchens, soccer, weight lifting, track & field, and forest research in remote locations, I've come to derive personal satisfaction from feeling physically capable. Nevertheless, my present condition has clear roots. In the past year, graduate school has opened and challenged my mind in so many exciting intellectual ways that I almost haven't noticed the toll of stress.

The late nights, the rushed meals, the sedentary screen time, the constantly churning brain... I almost haven't noticed, except when those occasional epiphanies come along and reality suddenly becomes obvious. My rolls hurt, and even months of conscientious technique adjustment haven't helped. I have realized that the pain

may not be due to a critical technique flaw, but rather a situation in which my back and arm muscles are too atrophied to cushion me and help me to frame properly into a rounded surface.

Understanding this now allows me to actively work on making things better. Meanwhile, however, being fragile is teaching me things.

Fragility is its own motivator. It challenges me to improve my *ukemi* out of necessity. I am, right now, far more movable than I am used to being. This situation changes the type of practice partner that I can be. It is interesting, sometimes frustrating, ultimately humbling, to rarely be able to make a point, to always have to let someone else make their point while adapting to protect myself. I cannot, for the sake of my own safety, resist being thrown. Sometimes, I have wondered, what use am I as a partner? How does someone practice with a fragile person, and what good could it possibly do for them?

I am discovering that fragility is not about being weak; it's about being physically sensitive, which is a rather extraordinary situation, if you think about it. If one can just dial in one's own sensitivity and awareness enough, working with a fragile person can really expose all the minutiae of one's technique. You can understand how centered you are, how relaxed, or how smooth, by observing the movements of your partner. Sensitivity means that someone reacts to angles, forces, and intents in a more nuanced fashion. Fragile partners can offer a wonderfully detailed illustration.

This experience of movability is still ongoing, and I'm still trying to understand and accept its various forms and effects. Like pain, fragility is proving to be informative, creating opportunities for new insight. I'm glad to be back on the mat in a new dojo, this dojo, for this next chapter in my Aikido training. Thank you all for your practice, instruction, and dedication.

Aikido

Erica Frederickson

Aikido is peaceful, though it is a battle
An offender, then defense, is all.
You blend through the forces of man fighting you
And maintain your peace through the fall.

The fall is the finish, saying that it is cleared
To get there, you have to be gentle
In a synchronized motion, you pass through the strike
It takes keeping patient, through physics and mental.

In Aikido, no one loses or wins
It completes with a punctuation.
It is easy to do, but you must follow through
And know everything in the situation.

Like walking through a door, the rest is no more
The attack will be cleared and done.
Aikido seems strange, or hard, or wrong,
But in truth it's really much fun!

Jo Suburi, Bokken, Tonto, and strikes,
All come with much strength and force,
Just to blend through, not to hurt or to harm
Aikido is peaceful, of course!

Shihonage, tai no henko, kokyuho and all blends,
All are the same in a sense.
All blend through an attack or a strike just the same
Not using harm, and not using offense.

Just listen to me, and hear my words:
Aikido is not fighting, just blend.
Not fire on fire, no bigger flame
Just to extinguish the harm and defend.

Aikido is excellent, it's fun and it's great
I can do Aikido all day!
So, in case you need to learn self-defense
Come to Aikido, Davis, CA!

Suburi

Fundamental Kata of Aikido

Martin Dubcovsky

The principle method for the transmission and conservation of martial arts are kata: prescribed motions which codify important principles of the art. Kata are transmission of principles, they are not comprehensive; proficiency in the kata should not be confused with mastery of the art. A martial artist must drill kata diligently and mindfully in order to first train his body, then train principle, and then apply principle to uncover the art. On the other hand, trained without attention to principle, the kata becomes empty and devoid of purpose.

While the *kata* label is only used to name a handful of jo practices, every technique in the technical curriculum of Iwama Ryu Aikido can be considered as a kata: a morsel of Aikido knowledge to chew on for a long time.

However, where it comes to partner practices, the kata can become confused by the natural variations that arise as we adapt to each partner's particular distance, timing, power, etc. Though necessary, these variations introduce changes to the form. If the form is always changing, it becomes very difficult to tease apart principle and form.

To help reduce variation, and delve deeper into Aikido principle, I have found it increasingly important to train without a partner. Solo practices are a chance to regulate the many variables in training and become fully responsible for generating both the form and content of the practice.

I categorized the few solo practices that I know into three broad categories: tai sabaki, suburi, and jo kata. For me, the jo kata is often too complex and long to be useful as the basis for my practice. I would become caught up in remembering the form rather than focus on principle. On the other hand, I initially found tai sabaki so simple that it was too difficult for me remain

mindful and present throughout prolonged training sessions.

It was not until after I had drilled suburi regularly that the tai sabaki began opening up as a rich practice ground. Equally it was not until suburi had become sufficiently cemented that I stretch my focus to practice the kata as a single move, rather than interrupted pieces. For my training needs, suburi is the Goldilocks of solo practices. Not too long, not too short. Not too simple, not too complex. It's just right!

For me, forming a habit of a daily suburi practice had great importance in of itself. Taking my practice out of the dojo in this way had a twofold effect.

First and most obviously I was training more and more often. And even when I wasn't training my mind would still be lingering on the training, effectively continuing my practice. With frequency also comes familiarity, making it easier and quicker to shift gears from sitting calmly at my desk to training at full intensity.

The second change was to make me responsible for my own training. This was a profound restructuring of my relationship to Aikido. Up until this point, my job was to show up to class; everything else was handed to me. Taking the reins for my own training was a landmark shift in my development in Aikido.

Suburi is not flashy, the moves are simple, and the prospect of repetitive practice may seem boring. But in truth suburi practice is a rich and rewarding exercise. The practice of suburi at home without the benefit of instruction and corrections, fosters increased awareness. That awareness can be turned inward to discover and test principles of body mechanics such as:

- Posture
- Weight distribution
- Alignment
- Efficient use and relaxation of muscle
- Centering
- Extending
- Gathering
- Engaging the hips
- Independence of left and right
- Grounding

These are all nice buzz words in martial arts, and most of us have heard about these things in class. We may even have an academic appreciation for some of these

principles. Practicing suburi is a fundamental practice for connecting those principles to the body, and put them into action.

While I have limited my discussion primarily the physical principles, this is not a limitation of suburi. Over the past year my suburi practice has expanded in unexpected and rewarding dimensions. However, I do not yet feel qualified or comfortable discussing these aspects of my practice.

I am continually surprised at how much this simple practice has to offer, and I encourage everyone to adopt and sustain a healthy suburi habit.

*Ego and Trouble
Gently Fall Away as my
foot touches the mat*

Justin Azevedo



O'Sensei and Saito Sensei

What is commitment?

Donn Shiu

To me commitment is a decision or promise to do something or not to do something followed by a set of action leading toward your goal.

- Be Decisive
- Once decision is made focus on taking appropriate, consistent and persistent action
- Yet, be flexible enough to adapt
-

With our busy lives, we make decisions every day. These are helpful skills that I wish to share, because I need constant reminders myself, at work and at play. These principles are applicable in many situations. When one decides to work, the focus should be work. When one decides to play, enjoy play with no guilt. Be flexible with changes. Indecisive, no action, and not flexible are not very desirable traits.

In marital arts practice, the consequence is somewhat obvious. Being decisive is important where action & reaction take place between partners. A properly executed action enables a proper reaction. For example, when you strike you must strike with intent and conviction along with proper technique on target. The nage will then be able to take that intended energy and execute an appropriate reaction.

Adding to the mix is the awareness that situation can change anytime. Like a chess match, your uke may reaction to your reaction by changing the attack. In such a dynamic situation, one must be alert and prepared to adapt to change. Hence, the idea of action/reaction is so important.

Metaphorically, don't point at anything you don't intent to shot. But once decided, clear you mind, aim, and fire (a.k.a. fully commit, let it fly, follow through, complete the strike). Sometimes the target can move or even counter. So, be aware and be ready.

Make any commitments lately? I suggest go for it!

The Heart Says ...

Kori Farrell

Release the unnecessary,
Ego and all.

Search for sincerity--
Compassion, caring.

Recognize
When they are hidden
by distractions

and clear the path.

'Do not concern yourself
With the rights and wrongs of others...'

Instead, Journey to the heart of what truly matters.
Don't worry,
you know the way.

Dynamic balance
makes the Universe.

Move in stillness,
No matter how loud...

Find the calm water,
beneath the waves

And the silence of space and sky,
High above the storm.

Broaden your scope, and you will remember,

That everything exists
In this moment
Somewhere, right here,
Within the whole.

Choices are infinite. Possibilities are infinite.

Listen closely, in the stillness,
For the Way of Peace.

Recent Promotions

Congratulations to the following students:

Yoav Zysberg	7 th Kyu
Aidan Murray	8 th Kyu
Alexis Lee	8 th Kyu
Allison Whaley	8 th Kyu
Fiala Janata	8 th Kyu

Announcements

Seminar in Roseville – Saturday Sept 28, Sensei will be teaching a seminar at the Aikido & Healing Arts Center of Roseville. For information and registration, visit: <http://rosevilleaikidocenter.com>

Beginner's Course: Sensei will be teaching a beginner's course running Oct 1 – Nov 21 every Tues, Thurs 6-7pm. Visit our website for more information.

Shidoin Course – Friday, Nov 1 – Sun, Nov 3. Bill Witt Shihan and Hoa Newens Sensei will be co-teaching this intensive instructor training. Any instructor can participate; however, Shidoin certification is only available to Fukushima certificate holders. Visit our website for more information.

Note from the editor: All formatting, spelling and grammatical errors are unintended and the sole responsibility of the editor—My apologies!

-Martin Dubcovsky